TOWN AND COUNTRY:
THE AMENITY QUESTION

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THE FABIAN SOCIETY

TWO SHILLINGS

R. M. STUTTARD has made a study of amenity questions over a number of years.

FABIAN RESEARCH SERIES 204

THE FABIAN SOCIETY,
11, Dartmouth Street, S.W.1.

February, 1959.

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I. Introduction

THE Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, with the related legislation concerning new towns and national parks, initiated a new era in the controlled adjustment of environment to changing and growing needs. If its early tasks were associated with the aftermath of war this was only incidental. The continuing purpose (perhaps better seen after ten years' experience of its working) is to plan the use of land under pressure of competing requirements: individual or communal, local or national, sectional or general, short-term or long-term.

Essentially, therefore, the exercise of planning powers is a matter of judgment, of balancing one factor against others, and of deciding between alternative courses of action in the light of competing claims and possibilities. The primacy of this function may be obscured because controversy in planning is largely and properly concerned with quantitative and technical detail—with space standards and building heights, or with financial provisions for compensation and betterment. But, important as these are, they are only steps on the way to a result which must be judged by the *quality* of the environment created. The success of planning is not finally to be measured in terms of mass or numbers: it depends on the quality, variety and scope of the satisfactions provided.

In Britain, and especially in England and Wales, the problem is now posed in peculiarly crucial form. The more vigorous the national effort in terms of growth of the economy, in technological progress, in standards of living, and in new opportunities for enjoying leisure, the more difficult it becomes to ensure that our very limited space is utilised to the best advantage—assuming that the aim of policy is not a mass response tending to produce uniformity, but opportunity to enjoy the range and diversity of individual capacity and taste.

This pamphlet is concerned with a particular quality basic to much enjoyment, and as important a component of the standard of living as those items more easily discussed because they are measurable. Its theme is landscape beauty—the visual 'amenity' of town and country—its safeguarding and creation, and the facilities for its enjoyment.

In this field Government policy will be concerned less with legislation (existing planning powers being generally adequate) than with two other considerations. First, the provision of additional finance: there is a need for wider recognition that amenity values are part of the standard of living, and that it is unrealistic to allow weight to them only if this involves no cost. Second, re-orientation of thought in the public corporations, whose statutory duty makes them major operators in changing the face of Britain, and who are able to a remarkable extent to carry plans to an advanced stage before any opportunity is given for public criticism. The situation thus created is a frequent cause of misgivings. The possibility should be considered of appointing to the boards of such corporations a member with special responsibility to consider amenity aspects of policy. There would be no intention of superseding consultations which already take place with other bodies. But it would serve to ensure that these aspects receive consideration during the early stages of discussion, to the advantage both of amenity and the general standing of the boards.

Public Rights

Again, among temporarily controversial problems, a separate group may be distinguished affecting rights and relationships between individuals, and to which a solution must chiefly be sought among local authorities, and in changed attitudes on the part of sections of the public. These include the negotiating and maintaining of public rights of way and access to open country, the behaviour of visitors to the countryside and, conversely, the attitude to visitors of landowners and farmers. At present these show the symptoms of a transitional period. On both sides there is need for more tolerance and understanding, but the amount of goodwill already existing indicates that there need be no clash of interest between town and country. An improvement in relations here would be a great mutual gain. This is a field which could with advantage and at almost insignificant cost be more actively and imaginatively cultivated by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the National Parks Commission.

Finally, there is a group of fundamentally controversial problems, concerning which no absolute judgments are possible. These include such broad general questions of planning as what should be the balance between town and country, or between high density and low density housing in cities and suburbs: and again, questions of design and style in architecture and of site treatment and landscaping. A danger here, which is not avoided by some critics of the amenity position, lies in assuming that because these are matters of taste and preference, subject to whims of fashion and changing ideas, it is not possible to achieve a sensible and coherent policy.

Sense and Sensibility

Such critics have no difficulty in demonstrating that each age has its own fashions and that what is well thought of at one period may be rejected in another. It is easy enough by hindsight and by careful avoidance of

a rounded exposition to pick out the faults and foibles of each age in succession, and by judicious sniping on the sidelines to effect a similar disparagement of contemporary efforts. Alternatively this line of argument can lead to advocacy of a nonsensical eclecticism, as where someone suggested not long ago that the pit heaps of County Durham might come to be admired as relics of their age. Such views may serve some purpose in demonstrating their own sterility and, by contrast, the need for order, for selection and sensibility. If it is true that each age has an urge to express itself, it will do so effectively only by striving for the best of which it is capable. To do so involves accepting the proposition that a concern for amenity is a condition of civilised existence.

Much has already been achieved by legislation and the activities of statutory authorities and voluntary associations. Some recommendations for further action will be made below. But first it is necessary to consider briefly the framework provided by statute and the roles of statutory and voluntary bodies.

2. The Administrative Framework

IT can now be seen that the reform of 1947 effected an advance of permanent value in establishing a comprehensive system of planning authorities at the level of counties and county boroughs. It made the planning unit large enough and its tasks of sufficient importance to attract entrants of high calibre to what has emerged as a new profession. In requiring local authorities to prepare development plans the Act compelled them to a review of natural resources and to a long-term view of probable requirements. It was the first step towards a rational programme of development based on assessment of all known factors and competing interests, in place of piecemeal and haphazard change. There was no intention of laying down a final and rigid scheme. Like Domesday before them, the plans are intended as an administrative guide to present facts and to the potentialities of desirable change. Each planning authority is required to carry out a fresh survey ' at least once in every five years.'

Local Planning Authorities

The influence of local planning authorities on amenity is exercised chiefly through their general powers of granting or withholding planning consent or issuing a conditional consent. But under Part III of the Act they also have powers to act specifically ' in the interests of amenity ' in such matters as the removal of disfigurements, preservation of trees or woodlands and buildings of architectural or historic interest.

Additionally, powers are available to *all* local planning authorities in England and Wales under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. These include power to create, divert, or extinguish public

rights of way over footpaths and bridleways, to provide for public access to open country by agreement, order, or acquisition, to plant trees for amenity purposes, to treat derelict land for the same purposes, and to establish nature reserves. The provisions as to nature reserves apply also to Scotland. Further, every county council in England and Wales is required under Part IV of the Act to carry out a survey of public footpaths and bridleways with the object of preparing a definitive map and statement; provision is made for review at any time and not less than once every five years. Similarly, under Part V, they are required to ascertain what open country there is in their area and to consider whether public access to it for open-air recreation is adequate or requires action to provide for it under their powers already mentioned. The provisions of Parts IV and V of the Act may also be adopted by county borough councils.

PROTECTION OF SPECIAL AREAS

A feature of the development plans are the so-called 'white areas', i.e. those for which no proposals are currently made and in which it is intended that existing uses should be substantially maintained. Typically the 'white areas' are good agricultural land, and in theory their non-classification should be a sufficient safeguard. But in practice they enjoy no certain immunity, and it is admitted that a good deal of development is taking place. 'White areas' provide no guidance to a planning committee as to the relative value of one part or another when some factor other than agricultural use, for example amenity value, is being considered. Recent moves to differentiate 'green belts' over parts of the 'white areas' fringeing the larger built-up areas are therefore a welcome improvement in definition.

Green Belts

The current concept of a green belt ring to check further growth of a conurbation or large town derives from the late Sir Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan. It is there considered as a ring of country girdling the existing built-up area and varying in depth from five to ten miles. Preservation of the belt would be achieved by planning control, thus halting the sprawl of the city's expansion. Development would be diverted to the related concept of the new towns and to other towns which could suitably be expanded in the open country beyond the belt. The Metropolitan Green Belt is included in the development plans of the Home Counties.

Impetus was given to the formulation of other green belt schemes by the issue of the Ministry's Circular 42/55 which recommended planning authorities to consider providing them wherever needed to check further growth or to preserve a town's special character or to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. It was followed by Circular 50/57 which advised how such proposals should be incorporated in development plans, and emphasised that the specially strict control in green belts should not result in permission being given elsewhere for development detrimental to the countryside—an indirect reference to the 'white areas'.

Under present arrangements many different planning authorities are involved in a single scheme. Co-operation exists but responsibility for co-ordination rests with the Ministry.

National Parks

Provision is made in development plans for notification of areas of high landscape value. Many such areas already enjoy protection in various ways, in particular under the National Trust Act, 1907. The considerable holdings of the National Trust, amounting in England and Wales to 233,000 acres, ensure the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of much mountain and moorland, woods, forests and large tracts of coast, in addition to the Trust's perhaps better known protection of notable buildings.

But the National Parks Act of 1949 introduced further classifications of areas where it is intended to ensure specially high standards of protection, and it created new agencies for their administration. The Act, despite weaknesses to be noted later, is a landmark in the protection of the life and landscape of the countryside, and in providing for its fuller use and enjoyment by a predominantly urban community. Its scope, as already indicated, is wider than its short title. Thus the second duty laid on the National Parks Commission, viz.—provision or improvement of facilities for enjoyment of the national parks, is limited to the parks; but its first duty, the preservation of 'natural beauty' in England and Wales, is applicable to any part of the country, and its advice on the amenity aspect of any proposal for development is available generally to local authorities, government departments and (in some circumstances) to 'any other body of persons or person'.

The Commission has power to designate national parks, long distance routes, and 'areas of outstanding natural beauty' (A.O.N.B.). Designation is intended to ensure that in the control of development special regard will be held to amenity.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The distinction between a national park and an A.O.N.B. is not qualitative but is primarily one of size. Thus, with reference to national parks, the Act refers to 'extensive tracts of country', and the ten national parks so far established comprise an aggregate of 5,250 square miles, or about one-eleventh of the area of England and Wales. The Commission has in fact completed the major part of its work of designation in this category. But in the designation of As.O.N.B. it is still in the early stages of a heavy programme which is likely to occupy it for several years. The six As.O.N.B. so far confirmed comprise an aggregate of about 350 square miles.

Quantitative distinction as a basis for deciding the type of designation produces considerable differences in administrative treatment and this, though appropriate in some cases, can result in anomalies. No one, for example, would wisely attempt to judge between the splendid coast of Gower (an A.O.N.B.) and that of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. But whereas

in a national park the aim is both to preserve and enhance the landscape and *to provide for its enjoyment by the public,* in an A.O.N.B. there is only the duty to preserve and enhance. From one point of view this is not necessarily a disadvantage; conceivably it could lead to As.O.N.B. being more effectively protected from some forms of development—for example, caravan sites and car parks—than is the case in national parks. Where the area is small, or situated near to urban development—for example, Cannock Chase or the Malvern Hills—the distinction is useful, but its validity is less certain in larger areas such as Gower or the Lleyn Peninsula, particularly in the latter case which is remote from large centres of population.

Forms of Administration

There is a further main difference. For a national park, special administrative arrangements are prescribed: where it lies within the area of one local planning authority there shall be a separate planning committee; where it is within the area of more than one authority there shall preferably be established a joint planning board with full executive powers, or alternatively a joint advisory committee. Whatever the form of authority, not less than one-third of the members are to be nominated by the Minister after consultation with the Commission. In this way provision is made for consideration of the national aspects of the amenity of the parks whilst voting control remains with the locally elected majority.

In an A.O.N.B., on the other hand, no special form of authority is prescribed: discretion lies with the local planning authority to decide how it shall be administered. It may decide that no special arrangement is necessary, but powers are available for it to establish a separate sub-committee under Part II of the First Schedule of the Act of 1947, in which case co-option is possible as the Schedule only requires that 'a majority . . . shall be members either of the local planning authority or of the councils of county districts comprised in the area of that authority'. Use of these powers could therefore produce much the same result as nomination of a third of the members to a national park authority. The value of doing so is that the services of those with special knowledge of the area can be brought to the consideration of its planning problems.

Neither in a national park nor in an A.O.N.B. does designation, in itself, create any right of public access.

Nature Reserves

As already mentioned, the provisions of the National Parks Act with regard to nature conservation (mostly contained in Part III) apply also to Scotland. Local authorities exercising functions under Part III are required to do so in consultation with the Nature Conservancy.

Nature conservation for scientific research necessitates close regulation, usually involving direct participation in management and in some cases change of tenure. The Nature Conservancy was incorporated by Charter in 1949 and, in addition to its charter powers, received powers under the National Parks Act. Under them it may enter into an agreement with an

owner or occupier of land for it to be managed as a nature reserve where, in the opinion of the Conservancy, this is ' expedient in the national interest '. The Charter already provided for purchase or lease for the same purpose. The effect of designating land as a nature reserve is that it receives Crown Land status and that by-laws can be made for the protection of wild life.

The Act requires the Conservancy to notify local planning authorities of sites of special scientific interest (S.S.S.I.) and even where these do not formally become nature reserves they are to some extent protected by the fact that the Conservancy must be consulted before any planning consent to development is given.

The Conservancy has tackled vigorously the task of building up a balanced selection of different habitats, an increasingly urgent matter in face of the recent heavy rate of destruction. At the end of 1957 some fifty national nature reserves had been declared and many more were being negotiated. They range in size from a few acres to the 40,000-acre Cairngorms Nature Reserve. In aggregate their area exceeded 120,000 acres, or about 190 square miles. In addition several hundred S.S.S.I. had been notified to planning authorities.

The extent to which other uses of land in a nature reserve can continue without detriment is a matter for separate decision in each case, as also is the extent to which public access can be permitted. The policy is to be as liberal as possible, but in some cases the purpose of having a reserve would be defeated if access were not restricted.

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

The strong national tradition of voluntary action is well exemplified in the field of planning and amenity by the activities of numerous national and local societies.

The latter, of which some hundreds exist, include civic societies such as the Oxford Preservation Trust and societies concerned with the amenity of a part of the countryside such as the Gower Society in South Wales and the Friends of the Lake District. They play an essential part in stating the amenity case where proposals for development or change of land use arouse controversy, and in protecting and enhancing the beauty of the locality. In an age of intense pressure to develop, the existence of a vigorous local society is in fact the one sure safeguard against matters of amenity concern going by default. It can offer an effective channel of democratic expression valuable both to the public and to the authorities with whom the final decision rests. The formation of more voluntary associations of this sort should be further encouraged. There is no reason why they should be found chiefly in historic towns or the more beautiful parts of the countryside. The need for them is at least as great on the new suburban estates and in the old industrial towns where their creation could be a step towards shuffling off the unconcern of the past.

The role of the national societies tends to be more complex. On the one hand they are concerned with national policy and the details of legislation, maintaining a close relationship with Ministries and statutory bodies,

scrutinising bills and statutory instruments and perhaps themselves suggesting amendments. In this they are necessarily dealing with abstractions. On the other hand much of their work may be concerned with cases and they may be frequently represented at public inquiries either because there is no local society or because the case is considered of national importance. The societies' journals and reports are the means of co-ordinating opinion among members and of making their views known to the press and a wider public.

The limitations upon local societies are territorial: within their area they may concern themselves with all aspects of planning, amenity, rights of way and public access. The national associations tend to specialise in one part of the field. Thus, to cite a few examples: the primary concern of the Town and Country Planning Association is with broad aspects of planning policy; that of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (C.P.R.E.) is with visual amenity (with much emphasis on specific cases, and a more positive approach than its name suggests); and that of the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society (again embracing a good deal of case work) is with rights of use and access by commoners and the public.

SIGNS OF STRESS

Clearly there has been established an impressive system of statutory authorities with wide powers of planning control, and carrying out their duties in the light of more or less continuous criticism and advice from informed sections of the public. It might reasonably be thought that all was well. Planning has, indeed, considerable achievements to its credit and the position would be far worse without it.

But there are many misgivings. And it is not necessary to travel far in town or country to see that they are justified. The urban sprawl continues; wires and masts proliferate with the crude clumsiness of Victorian plumbing; many important activities, such as those of highway authorities, defence departments and the Forestry Commission, are not subject to ordinary planning control; public corporations are content to stand on the narrowest interpretation of their statutory duties. Everywhere, it seems, threats exist to what the National Parks Commission has called 'our slender reserves of unspoilt country'. This view, it should be remembered, is that of the official body best placed to make an assessment. But evidence of public apprehension is also increasing.

Counter-Attack

Three recent reactions against ugliness and spoliation may be cited. First, the *Architectural Review's* 'Outrage' and 'Counter-Attack against Subtopia' campaigns have drawn attention to the mass of unco-ordinated objects which assault the vision in town and country, and to the blurring

of distinction between places which characterises the present age. Second, with the object of stimulating public interest in good architecture and civic planning, the Civic Trust was formed in 1957. It proposes to work closely with existing amenity societies, and is notable for the strong financial support it is receiving from industrialists. Third, the formation in 1958 of a Council for Nature demonstrates the fact that a Government agency—even so dedicated a body as the Nature Conservancy—is not in itself fully effective to achieve its inherent purposes: it requires the support of public opinion and complementary action based upon it. That opinion must be able to make itself known. The Council, which will provide a central body through which biologists, professional and amateur, can act together, is comparable to similar bodies in other countries.

Some of its anxieties and its approach to them were made clear by Lord Hurcomb in his Presidential Address. The Council, he said,

> 'is not going to take up an impracticable, hostile or obstructive attitude towards developments which are necessary in the economic interests of the country. But there may be and often are different ways of securing those results . . .'
>
> 'We are entitled to ask to be satisfied that schemes involving biological devastation . . . are really necessary and inevitable—not merely rather more convenient or rather less expensive than some practicable alternative.'

Among many examples, he cited the need for wiser application and better observance of precautions in the use of chemical herbicides and insecticides, and commented on the widespread pollution of streams by effluents as 'a gross abuse of a national resource, towards which authority is far too complaisant'.

Man and his Environment

These instances are symptomatic of a more general embarrassment succinctly stated by Miss Sylvia Crowe, President of the Institute of Landscape Architects:

> 'Man in this country is in the position of an animal who has overbred in relation to his environment. By the laws of nature either he or his environment will deteriorate unless he can use his skill and mastery over natural forces to adapt his habitat to the new density of the species. This applies not only to the productive capacity of the land. It is equally true of the appearance of the landscape'.[1]

Thus it is no answer to plead pressure of population and rising material standards made possible by the scale of modern industry. The quality of the environment is itself a factor in the standard of living. Miss Crowe's book should be read for its careful analysis of the four main types of environment: urban, suburban, rural and, finally, the wild landscape—a scale of progression from scenes dominated by man to those where nature indisputably dictates. Her chapters are casebooks providing many practical illustrations for the proper development of each category in terms of what

[1] *Tomorrow's Landscape*: Architectural Press, 1956, p. 13.

is economically necessary and visually desirable—for in the twentieth century the two must be made to coincide like the double image of a range-finder:

> 'The divorce of use from beauty which took place in the last century undermined the foundations of good landscape. It accepted industry as an ugly necessity which must be borne or at best be hidden, and trusted that sufficient of the remaining landscape would retain its beauty, even though its agriculture were neglected. There was no realisation that misuse and neglect of land inevitably leads to bad landscape, nor that it might be possible to create a new beauty from man's industrial needs. So long as the urbanised areas were comparatively small this view persisted without challenge, but now there is no space left to divide our land into the useful and the beautiful; we must make the two coincide. The landscape has at the same time to be our workshop, our playground and our environment'.[1]

Tomorrow's Landscape gives a timely lead. It is written from the professional viewpoint of a landscape architect. Accordingly it leaves aside questions of legislative and administrative action and of the financial provision necessary to realise its concepts. These are the questions which must now be considered.

3. The Clash of Interests

IT is proper to discuss first the built-up areas. Here the challenge to amenity is most acute and affects directly and continuously the largest number of people. Moreover, responsibility for the future appearance of Britain as a whole must rest ultimately with the urban majority, its needs and opinions.

First, must the total built-up area further expand? Is it reasonable or practicable to confine it to its present bounds? And if not, where should expansion occur? A recent estimate by Dr. R. H. Best puts the total urban area in England and Wales at some 2½ million acres, or nearly 6.8 per cent. of the surface. This hardly seems excessive having regard to the fact that it houses and provides work and services for nine out of ten of the population, half of them within the pull of the conurbations. Further expansion at the fringes into the 'white areas' should certainly be halted, as much in the interest of city dwellers as of preserving good agricultural land and the appearance of the countryside; but this must not imply an attack, as some advocate, on housing and open space standards in the urban areas. Post-war housing and other urban development has absorbed some 35,000 acres a year, and though the demand has passed its peak there remain acute problems of overspill. On a recent official estimate the likely future aggregate demand for all urban uses is about half a million acres. This should not be too great a price to pay to relieve congestion and to provide the house with garden desired by the majority of families.

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[1] *Ibid*, p. 12.

Some of this further development could reasonably occur as fringe expansion of small towns, but it would be disastrous if it were allowed to happen in the conurbations. But this will certainly occur unless they are given more help with their problems. The Government's attitude is ambivalent. Thus, with regard to green belts, several congested county boroughs responded quickly to the invitation to submit proposals, only to have their suggestions in some cases rejected. Again, a deputation from the Councils of Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Newcastle drew attention to their difficulties, chiefly financial, in providing for their over-spill population under the Town Development Act, 1952. And Birmingham and Glasgow, both with acute housing problems, have found their proposals for new towns opposed by the Government. Yet the rapid progress made in the fifteen existing new towns is one of the most encouraging developments of the post-war period. It is difficult to justify this reluctance to employ a similar solution elsewhere.

Expansion or New Towns

Birmingham illustrates the result. Having already been disappointed in its over-spill negotiations with other authorities it could hardly be satisfied with the Minister's suggestion that if it wished to proceed with a new town it should do so on its own resources. There need be no surprise that it now seeks a ' small limited extension ' of its boundaries. This is a tragic situation. Birmingham may have given assurances that it has ' no intention of opening its jaws and swallowing the surrounding countryside ', and the Minister may wish to safeguard the West Midlands green belt in the adjoining counties. But so long as the means necessary to relieve the pressure are denied, the realisation of green belt policy must remain uncertain even where, as in Birmingham, there is a strong desire to preserve it.

A solution must be sought along several lines: (a) a survey of the national distribution of industry as recommended in the Barlow Report,[1] with a view to dispersal to other industrial areas whose industries are declining; (b) the establishment, where necessary, of further new towns; (c) creation in each conurbation of a central planning organisation to take a comprehensive view of its requirements, including preservation of its green belt; (d) re-affirmation of green belt policy as a national objective.

Such policies would lessen the twin dangers of widespread dispersal of new industry over the countryside and of a gradual decline of the old industrial areas. Memories of the former depressed areas have not been a sufficient warning to prevent an unfortunate trend. It is pertinent to ask whether the scale and rapidity of industrialisation proceeding in the south of Bedfordshire is really in the national interest while large areas of industrial dereliction and waste land mark, for example, the outskirts of Swansea or when parts of industrial Lancashire and Durham could benefit from diversification of production. Too much is heard of ' in-filling ' for housing purposes, but as a policy for ensuring that derelict industrial sites received

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population*, H.M.S.O., Cmd. 6153, 1940.

new industrial use it would be unexceptionable. It would prevent a double loss: of good farmland in an essentially agricultural county, and waste of established services in industrial areas. There would be an all-round gain in amenity and utility.

Development and Dereliction

Second, what else can be done to prevent a recurrence of the cycle of industrial development followed by dereliction? The process is hardly more intelligent than the shifting cultivation practised in some primitive economies—and our land problem is far more acute. It may be good for current profits but the social and economic cost to the nation falls heavily on those who follow. Mr. Sadler Forster, Chairman of North Eastern Trading Estates Ltd., has described the immense effort made to clear a derelict site at Jarrow and its transformation into something of industrial beauty, and has asked:

> 'Has not the time come when an industry should be obliged to restore to its original condition land which it has occupied and abandoned? A firm which rents a factory has to bear the cost of dilapidations when it gives up its premises. Should not an industry which occupies land do likewise? Most of these derelict sites . . . are sites which industry itself has used and then abandoned, leaving the public to find a way, then or some years later, with public money which it can ill afford and which it may not even be allowed to afford, to put things right'.[1]

It would be too late to require this at the time of closing down. But if it were made a statutory liability there would be no great burden in providing a sinking fund against the contingency and the cost would properly fall on those who had benefited by use of the site. In practice, indeed, it could be largely recovered by income tax concessions. It would provide an incentive to better site management and closer attention to the problem of disposal of waste.

Third, there is the question of giving a new face to the otherwise thriving areas. The impetus given by war damage has affected only a small part of the whole. But the next period of development is likely to see a shift of main activity from the periphery to the inner rings of the built-up areas. Amenity in this field need not be greatly concerned with preservation. It is here that the nation's biggest job of rehabilitation and enhancement is waiting to be done. In the towns of the Midlands and the North there is no greater contrast than that between the beauty and utility of many of their products—ships, textiles, pottery, cutlery—and the appearance of their buildings, whether factories or workers' homes. And where the design is not mean, as in some of the civic buildings, the stone may be blackened by a century of soot. Technological progress and smoke control regulations already ensure that such towns will become cleaner and stay cleaner

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[1] Royal Society of Arts: Conference on Perils and Prospects in Town and Country, 1957.

as they are re-developed. But no inherent tendency exists towards them becoming better visually as places to live in. Planning alone will not ensure it, though it can go some way in the provision of open spaces and attractive layout of sites. Policy here should be directed towards two ends: to securing quicker replacement of out-of-date factory buildings, and to encouraging a more frequent resort to the services of architects.

With regard to industrial buildings, this is a field which has yielded some outstanding examples of contemporary architecture. But the mass of factories in the older industrial towns remain a conspicuous eyesore. The incentive to renewal must be financial. A suitable form already exists in the Initial and Annual Allowances on new industrial buildings and structures provided under the Income Tax Act, 1952, and the more favourable Investment Allowance introduced in the Finance Act, 1954, but which proved vulnerable to the credit squeeze. The rate of allowance can be a potent fiscal means of encouraging renewal. And it should be borne in mind that while industry will usually have its own sufficient incentive to renew plant and machinery (for which larger allowances have usually been granted) it is often content to carry on with buildings long out of date.

Scope for Architects

With regard to the employment of architects, local authorities are themselves in a position to give a lead. In the design of new houses on municipal estates, and in considering the planning applications of private developers, they should be prepared to risk a break from the mediocre conventional forms which have robbed so much suburban development of the interest it could have possessed. The architectural award schemes sponsored by West Suffolk County Council are obviously capable of general application. If it became the practice of housing authorities to institute such schemes a new age of patronage would result which in course of time could lead to a recovery of the distinctiveness of different areas.

Finally, within the built-up areas there is scope for far more planting of trees: on those housing estates where this was unaccountably forgotten; as a screen round industrial establishments and workings; and on waste heaps as an alternative to levelling. Local planning authorities might in this respect encourage private initiative. Reference has already been made to their powers under the National Parks Act to plant for amenity purposes.

THE COUNTRYSIDE

If, as has been suggested, room is found for most of the further growth of industry and living space within the existing urban area, plus a marginal expansion of about half a million acres, a major threat to the preservation of the countryside will have been met at a sacrifice of less than 2 per cent. of the land area, not all of it agricultural land.

But there are other needs to be met, some of them tending towards spoliation. To meet them the countryside, equally with the town, needs a

positive policy. Preservation is a valid concept but it cannot be arbitrarily and universally applied. There is need also for the same dynamic concepts as in the man-dominated landscape of the town: for high planning standards, rehabilitation and enhancement. The essential requirements are avoidance of incongruous development, a drive for removal of disfigurements and (a particular requirement in the countryside) willingness to come to terms with the new.

Something should be said about those features more or less natural to the countryside before discussing some of the more disturbing intrusions caused by the requirements of contemporary urban life.

(i) *Farming*

Much fine landscape, especially the pattern of field and hedgerow regarded as characteristic of south-east Britain, lies outside the areas of special protection. It is the ordinary farmland created by the agriculture of the last two centuries and yielding our greatest examples of enhancement of 'natural beauty'. The decisive part in its preservation is continued good farming and management. Modern farming despite its high mechanisation is still the chief enhancer of the landscape.

What is required in general from the farming community is an extension of the liberal attitude readily extended to visitors by many of their number. These know that the majority of visitors are interested in their work and eager to know more about it. Something is required on both sides: from visitors, the conduct which follows from recognition that their playground is the farmer's workshop; from farmers, a less parochial attitude to the need to preserve paths and stiles and facilities for public access. This is further discussed under Part 4 below.

(ii) *Trees and Small Woodlands*

Hedgerow trees and small woodlands form a component of the farming landscape and again their care and replenishment depend chiefly on farmers and landowners. The Committee on Hedgerow and Farm Timber,[1] reporting in 1955, drew attention to the dangers of indiscriminate mechanical trimming of hedges leading to the loss of saplings. It found that hedgerow timber in Britain amounted to some 807 million cubic feet and that this, representing 21 per cent. of the total volume of standing timber, included a third of the stock of hardwoods. It was likely to remain for some years 'one of the chief sources of supply of the largest-sized hardwood saw timber'. But 'undiscriminating cutting of all young growth, if not checked, will lead to a serious diminution of future yields'. And there was 'no evidence to show that much replanting is being done'.

Recognising 'the various economic, utilitarian and æsthetic interests involved', the Report includes recommendations for providing technical advice and practical assistance, Government encouragement of the work

[1] Forestry Commission: *Report of the Committee on Hedgerow and Farm Timber*, H.M.S.O., 1955.

of co-operative forestry societies 'with a view to reaching the position where every rural district is within the sphere of activity of at least one such society'; grant aid for approved planting schemes on farms, including roadside planting, and for incentives to tenant farmers to carry out such improvements. Implementation of the Report will depend on its being taken up vigorously by the Forestry Commission and by local authorities. It is recommended that such action would, among other gains, bring a considerable gain in amenity, and should be encouraged.

(iii) *Afforestation*

The work of the Forestry Commission, established in 1919, is chiefly concerned with large-scale commercial afforestation. Following the depletions of two wars its present aim, announced in 1943,[1] is to attain five million acres of forest within 50 years, two million on existing woodlands, the remainder on land in other use, chiefly rough grazing. The area planted and plantable reached 3,400,000 acres in 1956, but the Commission is finding difficulty in securing sufficient land. Emphasis in most forests is on conifers, because of the need for quickly maturing species. The programme is causing great changes in some remoter parts of the country.

Afforestation on this scale raises perplexing questions. Reference should be made to the curious position that the Commission—a major instrument of change over large parts of the countryside—is exempt from ordinary planning control. This undoubtedly aggravates the tendency for its operations—provision of homes for its workers as well as its planting—to be set down as a palimpsest without regard to integration with an existing settlement pattern. Thus the forest villages, admirable in their housing standards, form undiversified and isolated communities and are not yet large enough (and may never become so) to provide a good range of services. Yet their population would in some cases have been a useful addition to an existing village, to the advantage socially and in range of services of both communities.

Blanketing the Landscape

With regard to general public amenity the Forestry Commission is much more concerned than formerly to avoid the more unfortunate effects of blanketing the landscape with conifers. By contouring, by avoiding geometrical patterns and introducing variety of species at the fringe it has done much to meet objections. It is sympathetic to public access, to which it has given practical effect in the national forest parks.

Rather is it on the question of where extension of the planted area should be halted in each forest that there is increasing danger of loss of public amenity. Each forest tends to seek an annual planting commensurate with the capacity of its labour force, to avoid waste of manpower which at other seasons is occupied with other work in the forest. Yet on amenity or other grounds it might be desirable to call a halt to expansion

[1] *Report on Post-War Forest Policy*, H.M.S.O., Cmd. 6447, 1943.

much sooner in one forest than another. Thus in the North Yorkshire Moors National Park—whose high amenity value depends in part on the 'access of the eye' provided by sweeps of moorland—much planting is being undertaken. It is changing very considerably the face of the area. Consultations with the C.P.R.E. or the National Parks Commission are not a wholly satisfactory safeguard. And if a proposal becomes subject to public controversy (as, recently, with regard to Exmoor) farming and amenity interests are placed in a defensive position. Being denied an overall view it is difficult for them to rebut a claim that the proposal is an essential contribution to the national planting programme.

Planting Policy

The Forestry Commission has never been examined on the main questions—What is the precise conflict of interest in different areas which leads to difficulty in acquiring sufficient land? Why is more than half the planting effected in land-hungry England and Wales rather than in use-hungry Scotland where the activities of the Commission have already led to rehabilitation in some areas? Is it easier to buy out sheep farmers in Northumberland or Wales than to treat with sporting interests across the Border? Are sporting interests sacrosanct while national parks are fair game? Until the answers are publicly known it is not possible to reach a balanced judgment in a particular case. It is very desirable that this uncertainty over a major requirement of land use should be removed, as much in the interests of the Forestry Commission as of the public. It could be achieved by appointing a commission to report on means of providing the balance of land required whilst preserving for other uses the open character of certain areas. Its terms of reference would be wider than the technical considerations examined by the Zuckerman Committee.[1]

(iv) *The Defence Departments*

Reassessment in the nuclear age has led to changes and some reduction in size and number of training areas required by the Services. Some 150,000 acres of War Department land are being released, a substantial part within the national parks. It is to be hoped that further opportunities to release holdings in such areas will occur in the new fluidity of the defence situation. Training areas still dominate a large part of the Dartmoor National Park. And in the Northumberland National Park the proposal to introduce infantry training on the 55,000-acre Redesdale artillery range may lead to a loss of public access hitherto permitted on parts of the range.

The reasonable requirements of the defence departments for such purposes must be accepted. What is unacceptable, and increasingly indefensible in face of public opinion, is the treatment of derequisitioned or abandoned sites. After removing those parts of buildings which have some value the procedure is to return the land to the owner and pay compensation under the Compensation (Defence) Act, 1939, which is limited

[1] The Natural Resources (Technical) Committee (Chairman, Sir Solly Zuckerman): *Report on Forestry, Agriculture and Marginal Land,* 1957.

to its value at the time of requisition. The defence departments accept no duty to restore; neither is there any obligation on the owner. The resulting disfigurements are to be seen in many parts of the countryside, from the sagging wooden ends of roofless Nissen huts marking old airfields in East Anglia to the nameless eyesores on Carn Llidi which an observer is compelled to view in the otherwise splendid landscape of St. David's Head.

The same considerations apply as in those discussed when considering industrial sites. Restoration of land so far as possible to its original condition should be made a statutory duty. The Services are well equipped in men, machines and time to carry out the work more economically than contractors. And it is proper that they should set a better example to the public. This should apply to all future derequisitioning.

With regard to existing disfigurements, Mr. Michael Dower's recent initiative in organising volunteer demolition squads has shown what can be done. But it is admitted that on this scale the work would take many years to complete, and there would remain some jobs beyond the capacity of a voluntary organisation. Arrangements could be made through planning authorities and with the agreement of owners for the Services to undertake clearance in these cases.

SATISFYING URBAN NEEDS

The remaining mass of intrusive objects in the countryside includes much that is attributable to individuals and to private enterprise. In this field the ordinary processes of planning control are capable of ensuring reasonable standards. Advertisement control, for example, has become more effective where planning authorities have taken advantage of their powers to schedule an area as subject to special advertisement control. But further tightening-up of regulations and of their application is desirable, both in town and country, particularly along main roads and in the case of general advertising on railway property. The case for doing so is specially strong now that television is providing potent new means of communication with consumers.

But the chief agents of change are Government departments, public corporations and the larger enterprises of local authorities, such as water undertakings. Whether their developments occur in a form generally welcomed, as may be said of the motorways, or are looked on with dubiety, as is open-cast coal getting, they present by reason of their scale a conflict of interest. The dilemma of a developed society dwelling in a crowded island is here made apparent. Those who regret the masts and power stations also appreciate television, clean power and other basic services. The conflict is not clear-cut between amenity and utility; it is often between one form of amenity and another. Both are accepted as desirable. In many cases, therefore, rejection is not possible. The grounds for discussion are limited to questions of location, design and site treatment.

There is space only for selection and brief mention of two representative and contrasted topics. But something should first be said concerning an

increasingly felt difficulty at public enquiries where the application concerns a major development.

The recommendations of the Franks Committee[1] with regard to public enquiries were concerned with form and procedure with a view to securing 'openness, fairness and impartiality.' But form and procedure are not enough. In some cases it is also necessary to improve the substance of inquiries. At present, where the applicant is a large statutory undertaking, such as the Central Electricity Generating Board, an inquiry has too often the appearance of being a matter of form, a benevolent indulgence of the process of letting off steam, and an illustration of the principle of divide and rule. The nuclear power stations are a case in point. The real question, recognised as such by most objectors as by the C.E.G.B., is on which, out of a number of technically suitable sites, is the station to be placed? But this question is never properly posed. Despite requests by amenity societies the Board and the Minister of Power have not provided a list of sites proved suitable. The problem cannot therefore be faced squarely, and local inhabitants cannot be blamed for rising no higher in their arguments than to be divided into those in favour (because it may bring trade and employment) and those against (because they were first attracted to the place on account of its unspoilt character). Much time is taken with such arguments: but as they would be equally applicable to most other sites their irrelevance is apparent.

Public Local Enquiries

The limiting effect on the amenity societies is equally unfortunate. If allowed to do so they would readily face the responsibility of commenting from their point of view on the relative merits of different sites. This should in fact increasingly become their role. As a result of their past efforts the need for proper integration of new objects in the landscape is now more widely accepted; an amenity clause is becoming common form in major planning consents, as also is the appointment of a landscape consultant for such projects. But there remains the prior question of determining where the development should go. A schedule of probable site requirements of the main statutory developers for the next ten years with an indication of sites likely to be technically suitable would be an invaluable document. Again this is a matter on which a commission of enquiry could usefully report.

The C.E.G.B. might perhaps sigh that a poet could once write, with a hint of affection, that

> 'The way from Romney town to Hythe
> Alone its airy journey wound.'

But that is the point. It was alone. It unified the view as does a cathedral

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[1] *Report of the Committee on Administrative Tribunals and Enquiries*, H.M.S.O., Cmd. 218, 1957.

spire. Today the steel towers and cables are spreading ever more widely and threatening to enmesh every view. In south Lancashire the green belt is the preferred channel for minor distribution lines as well as high voltage. If the latter (with reservations as to routing) must for the present be accepted, the onus becomes greater on the C.E.G.B. and the area boards to place their other lines out of sight. There is a great opportunity here to give effect to the duty now for the first time imposed upon them by Section 37 of the Electricity Act, 1957, to take account of amenity. There is a good augury in the statement not long ago by Sir Josiah Eccles, Vice-Chairman of the C.E.G.B., that 'the arguments for overhead low voltage lines in a village are not nearly so strong economically as for high voltage lines.' To be rid of these in many villages and of 132kV lines in areas of high amenity value would be a real contribution to enhancement. A vigorous drive for their removal should be initiated by the Minister of Power.

Water Undertakings

Reservoirs can enhance the landscape. They provide good material for the landscape consultant. But here also the problem is changing. Rising demand comes chiefly from industry, an example being the requirements of I.C.I. on Tees-side producing a proposal, recently shelved, to construct a reservoir in Upper Teesdale. It would have damaged some fine river scenery and an important S.S.S.I. But it would not have met anticipated demand for more than a few years, after which industry on Tees-side would be seeking other longer-term satisfaction.

Questions arise as to what are the obstacles to industrial use of sea-water (as in the nuclear power stations), or to the impounding of river water nearer the tidal limit instead of in upland gathering grounds. Research into the technical and economic aspects of these questions might make a valuable contribution to the solution of Britain's water problem.

4. Access to the Countryside

AT one time, when St. Martins itself *was* in the fields, when Bethnal with its green was a pleasant stroll beyond the City's gates and men netted finches in the lanes where now is St. Pancras Station, a country walk was the freely available privilege of every man. Today the urge remains, though its satisfaction is often a costly and complicated business: desire and capacity to go far afield are matched by the necessity of doing so. To the tourists and sportsmen of an earlier period have succeeded the representatives of the modern movement: scouts, guides, ramblers, climbers, campers, youth hostellers and school groups.

Now they are augmented by two new streams. First, and most numerous, are the caravanners. Unkind things are said of them by those who think chiefly of the pre-planning rash of large sites which disfigure parts of the coasts. But these are not typical of the new and vigorous movement of caravan touring which is enabling many families to enjoy together

a rediscovery of the countryside. They are welcome evidence that the new motorist will not always be content to peer out at the scene only through the windscreen, as sad modern incarnations of the lady who 'walked through the fields in gloves, missing so much and so much.' Many will no doubt learn, as others before them, of the pleasure to be had from carrying in the car a large-scale map and stout pair of boots. Secondly, there is an increasing tendency, perhaps fostered by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, for youth clubs to undertake projects involving an adventurous approach to exploration in the country.

The Litter Problem

The attitude of authority to these movements is disappointing. It is not unfair to say that the Ministry is more interested in the question of litter than in access, and the same is regrettably true of the National Parks Commission.

This is not to minimise the litter problem. But it should be seen in proportion. It is one of the ten matters of conduct dealt with in the Commission's admirable Country Code, and by general consent it is the main charge against the public with regard to its behaviour. It is a problem which other countries have solved and to which much effort (co-ordinated by the Keep Britain Tidy Group) is being devoted. With the passing of the Litter Act it has now become a generally punishable offence and, as with the habit of spitting in an earlier age, is likely to be eradicated by the combined forces of propaganda and public disapproval. But in the context of the need to help visitors to enjoy the countryside it seems an inadequate peg on which to hang official attitudes of lukewarm approval and Mrs. Grundyism.

The townsman's need of access to the countryside produces problems of accommodation whether he brings a temporary dwelling, erects a place of his own, or uses existing facilities.

In the case of caravans, a distinction should be drawn between permanent settlements—which produce some of the worst forms of sub-standard dwelling—and holiday caravan sites which, though often a great eyesore, must be accepted as an essential and increasingly important form of family holiday accommodation. Local authorities require more effective powers for dealing with the former, whose occupants must eventually be absorbed into ordinary housing accommodation.

Siting the Caravan

By contrast, the holiday caravan has clearly a great future as an appendage, in more senses than one, of the rise in private motoring. It presents a problem requiring far more thought than has yet been given to it, and a more sympathetic and helpful approach than amenity societies, park planning authorities and others have yet felt able to make. The dilemma is real enough: it is the same problem in a different setting as the townsman's destruction of what he seeks when he builds a new home on the fringe of the

city. The holiday-maker, in search of freedom and contact with wild nature, on a lonely shore or at the head of a mountain valley, can only fully experience what he seeks, and preserve the special quality of the scene for others, provided that his intrusion is discreet and that he comes with the minimum of the impedimenta of civilisation.

If he comes with car and caravan he must be prepared to accept a site so placed that it does not become a main component of the scene. There is, in fact, need for greater care both in choice of sites and in their improvement by planting belts of trees.

But caravans are partly a reaction against the lack of accommodation in the right places and at the right price. More could be done to provide it in the form of guest houses, youth hostels, camping sites, and on the lines of alpine huts—with their often high standards of service and comfort. Planning authorities in national parks have as yet made little use of their powers in this respect. Against the difficulty of making a cash profit on seasonal use in remote areas should be set the real loss of landscape values, which shows itself in shack development and other unsightly intrusions, and is all too apparent in many places, especially on the coast. The problem is urgent, and its difficulties will increase, as the 'bulge' in population becomes wage earning. A bold experiment in providing further accommodation is called for. It will only be possible with Government encouragement and, in the initial stages, the support of a maintenance grant. The experiment should consist of several projects, at least one of which should have as its aim the return of a section of the coast-line to an unspoilt condition.

FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

On the question of footpaths and bridleways, two main lines of action require to be encouraged. First, action taken by local authorities under Part IV of the Act to survey and record rights of way should be followed by effective action to maintain them and to bring the fact of their existence to public notice. In most cases they derive originally from the needs of the neighbourhood or of the drovers and pack-horse carriers of earlier days. They were known to all with occasion to use them. Today, neighbourhood needs remain even though the countryman walks less than in the past; the strangers are no longer drovers and carriers following a seasonal route but visitors who may come only once on an annual holiday. These ways are a delightful feature of the countryside, already valued as such by many who find pleasure in the open air, and capable of serving well the needs of the *parvenu* as he comes to realise (as no doubt he will) that pleasure is less to be found amid the fumes and noise of arterial trunk roads than in the byways and, even more, in dispersal over the capillary tracks that lead from them into the quiet of the fields.

It is necessary, therefore, to break the circle whereby a footpath becomes first disused because the public are unaware of its existence, then overgrown and unusable without much effort at clearance, until, finally, this becomes the evidence to support an application for closure on the ground that it is no longer needed for public use.

Several steps could be taken to improve the position. Regulations should require that the definitive map be permanently displayed in every parish, the most generally suitable place being possibly outside the post office. Rights of way should be indicated on the official maps published by the Ordnance Survey. The tangle of divided responsibilities and uncertainties with regard to repair and signposting of paths and provision of stiles should be replaced by a simple and generally applicable code.

At present the position is broadly as follows. Responsibility for maintenance of paths rests with the highway authority. Parish councils have powers to repair but no obligation to do so. In practice, they are interested in paths within a village rather than those between villages. Signposting is within the powers of highway authorities and parish councils, but in neither case is it a duty. Maintenance of stiles is a liability of the landowner, as also is the keeping back of overhanging vegetation, whereas ground vegetation is presumably a matter for the highway authority. The practice in these matters depends therefore on the policy of each county. What seems to be required, in addition to codification, is some incentive for highway authorities to take action in the interest of the new user, such as the provision of grants towards the cost of erecting signposts in areas of high amenity value. These are especially required to indicate the ways through the farmlands to give access to the open country.

Regarding the second main line of action, there is need to improve the safeguards for existing paths and to make more use of the provisions for creating new paths under Sections 39 and 40 of the National Parks Act. These have as yet been little used, while Section 43, which was thought necessary as an appendage to provide for the closure of redundant paths, has become the principal means whereby paths are closed. And Section 56, which provides for temporary ploughing of paths (after notice to the highway authority), has led in effect to many paths being finally lost, the maximum fine of £2 being inadequate to prevent failure to give notice. It is suggested that Sections 43 and 56 should be withdrawn as out of keeping with the main purpose of the Act as set out in the Preamble, and that the numerous other statutory procedures for closing and diverting paths be replaced by a uniform procedure.

In addition to the need to control pollution of waterways, more attention should be given to the great potential amenity value of rivers and canals and to the special case of the Broads of East Anglia. Where waterways have deteriorated through decline in commercial use, maintenance in the interest of boating and angling and as nature reserves should still be considered. General public access to banks and tow-paths should be facilitated.

OPEN COUNTRY

On access to open country it must be said that Part V of the Act has a most unsatisfactory approach to the problem, raising more difficulties than it solves, and tending in practice to exacerbate rather than improve town

and country relationships. It is important to be clear as to what is meant by 'open country.' The Act defines it as land consisting 'wholly or predominantly of mountain, moor, heath, down, cliff or foreshore . . .' It also provides for any part of such land to become excepted from the access provisions when it is used for such purposes as agriculture other than rough grazing, or as a nature reserve, park, garden or pleasure ground, or for mineral working, quarrying or other development. So much is reasonable. Open country is therefore land on which the presence of the public for air and exercise is unlikely in itself to result in damage. And in practice it is freely resorted to by custom and commonsense understanding. But it is left to local authorities to decide whether existing provision for access is adequate: by which is meant whether the public already enjoys customary *de facto* access even if not *de jure*. Where this is not the case and an access agreement or order is made, the position is improved, somewhat grudgingly, to the extent that the public, subject to proper behaviour, 'shall not be treated as a trespasser.' Only in the Peak District has significant use been made of these provisions, and the Act is so curiously drawn that the Minister's default powers could only be exercised at the request of the National Parks Commission.

Rights and Usage

In contrast, Section 193 of the Law of Property Act, 1925, creates a legal right of access to all common land any part of which falls within an administrative urban district. It thus covers important stretches of open country such as Ilkley Moor and even one side of Helvellyn. Further, its provisions can be applied to commons in rural districts by the execution of a deed by the owner of the soil, and this can with advantage be done as it enables by-laws to be applied for its proper management and control.

The Royal Commission on Common Land[1] heard much evidence and opinion on access from a wide range of interests and noted the wide recognition of the value of common land as a source of public pleasure—a recognition significantly accorded by the National Farmers' Union and the Country Landowners' Association. The Commission's Report states:

> 'What most of our witnesses would wish to see is not the abolition of public access either as of right or in fact but the effective control and management of common land so that abuses, whether by private interests or the public, may be prevented or detected and punished.' (*para.* 99.)

They recommend (*para.* 314) 'that all common land should be open to the public as of right,' subject to proper behaviour and regulation through by-laws. 'Our proposal though primarily for the public good would in fact also benefit the private interests in common land.' (*para.* 317.)

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[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Common Land,* H.M.S.O., Cmd. 462, 1958.

> 'The extension generally of the public right of access is indeed a prerequisite to our other recommendations. It is no innovation but rather the logical conclusion of the long process over the past century of widening and establishing more firmly the free access over common land which the public has enjoyed in fact, though not generally in law, for a much longer period.' (*para.* 316.)

This proposal is a clear break from the historically conditioned attitudes and guilt complexes of the enclosure period to which the administrator's fear of the public can be traced. It looks at the reality of the situation —and again finds little worse than litter. It is indeed time that someone commented on the high standard of conduct of the majority of visitors to the countryside.

Common Land or Open Country?

By its terms of reference the Commission was limited to consideration of common land. But there is in fact little difference in appearance between rural commons and open country. Notably, the 80 per cent of all English common land found in the upland country of the north and west from Northumberland to Cornwall (and comprising over 800,000 acres) is largely identical with the open country found in the national parks. And similarly in Wales. Amending legislation should take account of this. At the moment, national parks are those parts of the countryside where authority specially reminds the visitor that he is unlikely to have any right of access. What the National Parks Commission ought to be able to say is that the interests of visitors are specially served as they contain the greatest tracts of that open country to which Parliament has conferred a legal right of access. Part V of the Act should be replaced by the provision of a general right of access to open country in England and Wales, subject to the restrictions set out in the Second Schedule of the Act and to re-enactment of appropriate provisions with regard to 'excepted land'.

The National Parks Commission

Such action would also serve to remove a difficulty which, however imaginary, seems to have had an inhibiting effect on the National Parks Commission. As official defender of the visual amenity of the countryside it fulfils its role with confidence and authority. Its efforts to provide for public enjoyment have, on the other hand, lacked conviction. A theoretical conflict between conservation and public enjoyment appears to have weighed far more than the importance of what it should regard as its inspiring duty to bring townspeople and country people together in mutual respect. If the Commission were relieved of the necessity of considering whether visitors to the countryside had a legal title to be there it might begin to see more clearly its duty to them: that to provide properly for their needs is itself part of the business of conservation and not in conflict with it.

With regard to the working of the National Parks Act it is generally agreed that the financial arrangements should be such that action taken specifically in the national interest should not fall as a charge on the local

community but should be grant earning from national funds. Recommendations to this effect are included in suggested amendments to the Act submitted to the Minister in 1956 and set out as Appendix H of the Commission's Seventh Report. Thus, in suggesting that in some cases a 100 per cent grant should be available, the Commission cite the cost of removing unsightly development as action 'of national rather than local benefit, which tends to be neglected, and it should in our view be encouraged'. And again, it is proposed that grants should be available in approved cases to compensate developers for extra costs by the higher standards demanded in national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Reference should also be made to the need to provide the Commission itself with additional staff at least until such time as the work of the formative period is completed. Progress in negotiating long distance routes, which is notably slow, has been attributed to pressure of other duties.

The opportunity provided by amendment should also be taken to remove a frequent source of confusion by removing wherever it occurs the dubious and ambiguous term 'natural beauty' and replacing it by 'landscape beauty'.

5. Conclusion

IT is often and no doubt truly claimed that the creation of visual amenity need add little to the cost of a development project. Similarly the removal of disfigurements, or the planting of trees and exercise of other powers available to local authorities for amenity purposes need not be a significant burden on the rates any more than the cost of undergrounding electricity lines where requested by the National Parks Commission would add more than a minute fraction of a penny to the unit cost of the Area Board concerned. The difficulty lies rather in the fact that, in the committees where such matters are decided, aggregates loom larger than proportionate costs. Thus, commenting on the block grant proposals at a Conservative Conference at Brighton, a delegate said, 'I think it will tend to cut out the frills and the little extras and there is far less likelihood of pressure groups trying to cause a council to incur further expenditure.' Amenity considerations are only too easily represented as 'frills and extras'.

For this reason it is suggested that a strong case exists for establishing a National Amenities Fund to be drawn on for the purposes with which this pamphlet has been concerned. The National Land Fund, suitably replenished after its reduction by the Chancellor in 1957, could conveniently be renamed and used to serve on a wider scale the purposes Mr. Dalton had in mind when establishing the Fund in 1946. Its present name is, in the event, a misnomer and the amenity needs of today are perhaps seen in a rather different light than in the immediate post-war years. A National Amenities Fund would assist the national parks but would also bring help in general to the creative tasks to be done in town and country.

The case for a Fund in place of the ordinary grant system is that it would emphasise the policy of being prepared to spend something on amenity and would show the element of on-cost attributable to it. Parliament's control of the Fund could be secured by periodical subventions.

* * *

It is not possible in a short pamphlet to do more than suggest certain lines of action. Many topics have been omitted and the discussion of others could be more fully developed. What should emerge in regard to land use is that exclusive use for one purpose is no longer possible or desirable in the situation as it exists in Britain. Multiple use and the tolerance that this entails must be the basis of policy. To the extent that this necessitates new objects in new places the position can be ameliorated by attention to design and willingness to incur some cost over and above the utilitarian minimum. To the extent that it involves accepting new people in the landscape it involves the all-round exercise of high standards of behaviour and willingness to understand the conditions of life and livelihood of others. Far from being a loss this should in time bring nothing but social gain.

Finally the high seriousness of the theme and its special place in the twentieth century must be recognised. A century ago Britain, spurred on by Chadwick, took the first essential steps to secure public health—a line of policy culminating in the legislation which challenged Beveridge's five giants of poverty, disease, ignorance, despair and idleness. So post-war planning legislation, in seeking a new level of happiness and well-being, discovers five new giants challenging its way. They may be named sprawl, ugliness, insensitiveness, estrangement and uniformity. They are to be thrown down by efforts towards containment, beauty, appreciation, rediscovery and variety. Legislation can provide the means of attack, but its ultimate effectiveness will depend on public and administrative interest and action.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Boards of public corporations to include a member with special responsibility to consider amenity aspects of policy.

2. Formation of more civic and amenity societies, particularly in industrial areas and suburban estates.

3. Conurbations. Expansion to be halted, but this not to imply an attack on housing and open space standards. Policy should be to assist local authorities with over-spill problems by creating further new towns. Re-affirmation of green-belt policy as a national objective. Creation of a central planning agency for each conurbation, its duties to include preservation of the green belt.

4. Small towns. Pressure in the conurbations could be partly relieved by fringe expansion of small towns.

5. Industrial location. A survey of the national distribution of industry as recommended in the Barlow Report with a view to dispersal to industrially declining areas. A policy of industrial 'in-filling' to prevent (a) waste of established services in such areas, (b) further loss of agricultural land.

6. Abandoned industrial sites. Industry should have a duty to restore to original condition.

7. Industrial buildings. Provision of greater financial incentives to renew industrial buildings.

8. Housing design. Sponsoring of more architectural award schemes by housing authorities.

9. Tree-planting. In both urban and rural areas local authorities should make greater use of their powers to plant trees, particularly on housing estates, waste heaps and to screen industrial buildings and workings.

Implementation of the Report of the Committee on Hedgerow and Farm Timber.

10. Afforestation. Appointment of a commission of inquiry into the requirements of plantable land by the Forestry Commission.

11. Defence services derequisitioned sites. The defence services should have a duty to restore sites to original condition before returning them to owners.

Where disfigurements remain on land already returned to owners arrangements should be considered for the services to undertake clearance by agreement.

12. Advertisements. Control should be extended and strengthened.

13. Requirements of major developers. Appointment of a commission to study the long-term site requirements of major developers.

14. Overhead lines. The Minister of Power should initiate a programme for removing low voltage overhead lines in villages and 132kV lines in areas of high amenity value.

15. Water resources. Study of possibility of greater use of sea-water, and of impounding river water nearer the tidal limit rather than in upland gathering grounds.

16. Residential caravans. Local authorities to have more power to deal with caravans used as sub-standard dwellings.

17. Holiday accommodation. Need to provide satisfactorily for holiday caravans in appropriate sites.

Need for Government encouragement of experiments in providing other accommodation, and for maintenance grants in initial stages. This to be linked with rehabilitation of parts of the coast.

18. Footpaths and bridleways. Amendment of National Parks Act to provide for permanent display of definitive maps. Rights of way to be indicated on Ordnance maps. Codifying of law on maintenance of paths, signposting and provision of stiles. Grants for erection of signposts. Repeal of Sections 43 and 56 of the Act. A uniform procedure for closure and diversion. Greater use of powers to create new paths.

19. Waterways. Action to preserve waterways for recreation and to provide access to banks and tow-paths.

20. Access to open country. Replacement of Part V of National Parks Act by provision for general right of access to open country (with appropriate conditions and exceptions).

21. National Parks. Amendment of financial and other provisions of National Parks Act in accordance with recommendations in 7th Report of the National Parks Commission. Additional staff for the Commission. Replacement of the term ' natural beauty ' by ' landscape beauty.'

22. National Land Fund. Use to be extended to purposes originally envisaged by Mr. Dalton, and to cognate purposes. To be renamed the National Amenities Fund and strengthened as necessary.

● *Printed in London by Devonport Press Ltd. (T.U.) W.12*